

You could ask yourself, well, if 70 percent of the families have children in public schools, why doesn't 70 percent of the money go there? It is because the families with children in private schools know they have a higher hurdle to get over and they are going to tend to save more. They are going to spend more. But it is still about 50–50.

They talk about the expenditure. This one is a little unique. But they seem to feel that if you leave a person's money they earned in their checking account and do not tax it, you have done them a favor. That argues that the Government owns all the money and decides what little pieces to give back to you. This is the people's money. The tax that will be saved by 14 million American families is \$520-some-odd million for 5 years in a \$1.6 trillion operation. We would leave \$500 million over 5 years in their savings accounts.

What is stunning to me is what it makes those American families do. They go out and save \$5 billion. This is \$5 billion that no school, no student will be able to take advantage of if we do not do this. It will never appear. So, by using this modest tax incentive, Americans do huge things. They save big dollars and every school system in America will benefit. Run down the litany—14 million families, over 20 million children, over \$5 billion being volunteered to come in to back up education needs, without any local school district having to raise a dime of taxes; volunteer dollars, families stepping forward trying to help their children.

You heard this is not a priority, just forget the 14 million families. They try to make the juxtaposition that this is either/or, it is a savings account or school construction. The other side needs to review and be mindful of several things. First of all, this is a bipartisan effort. The principal cosponsor of this bill sits right over there. His name is Senator TORRICELLI, from New Jersey. Another key one is right up here, and that is Senator LIEBERMAN, from Connecticut. And right over there is Senator BREAU from Louisiana. Midway over there is Senator GRAHAM of Florida. These are authors of this proposal too.

It is not just an Education Savings Account we are debating. We have heard a lot about school construction here. They need to review the proposal as offered by their side, Senator GRAHAM of Florida, which expands the ability of local school districts to finance school construction. That is right here. If school construction is important, it is part of the proposal. We have education savings accounts. We encourage States for early prepaid tuition. This encourages employers to pay for continuing education costs for their employees. One million employees will be positively affected by this.

As I said, school construction will be a part of the proposal, and helping the National Health Corps scholarships. All of these are what the bill is. Education savings accounts, I think, are a very

important piece, but they are just a piece. And, I might add, in terms of the—they call it costs—in terms of leaving the amount of money in the individual checking accounts, it is a minor cost as compared to the total. It is about 15 percent of this total proposal that is involved in the education savings account. So, once again, it helps families create savings accounts to help kids, a lot of them—20 million. It helps States create prepaid tuition. We heard a lot here about, "Let's get people into college," from the Senator from Arkansas. That is exactly what this bill does. It also helps employers continue to educate people. It helps build schools. All of this is in this proposal.

Having said that, since we have heard the Senator from North Dakota talk about the quality of a school—we want quality buildings. That is principally a State responsibility. We want to be careful we do not reward people who have not been getting the job done. There have been a lot of States building a lot of schools. If some haven't seen to that, it is not our job. You want to make sure everybody is being treated fairly here.

The last thing I say on that is, my dad was educated in a one-room schoolhouse. They had all the grades in one room. He learned how to read; he learned how to write; he learned how to add and subtract. In that one room, they gave him the tools he needed to be a full-fledged American citizen. And that is the problem here. We have hundreds of thousands of children coming out of grades K–12 who cannot read right, and they can't add, and they can't write. And the numbers are astounding. In city schools, only 4 in 10 can pass a basic exam; put all the schools together, only 6. An uneducated mind is denied full citizenship and the privileges and opportunities of that citizenship in the United States, and we have too many kids coming out where we are stunting their citizenship, their participation. We have to stop it.

There needs to be change. These are not all the ideas; they are some of them. Just to sit and defend the status quo is unconscionable.

Mr. President, I yield whatever of the 15 minutes was left, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to discuss briefly a Senate resolution relating to the Pulitzer Prize just won by a major newspaper in my State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNIZING THE GRAND FORKS HERALD

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, Senator DORGAN and I have prepared a resolution recognizing the remarkable work of the Grand Forks Herald in covering the disasters that beset that city last year.

The Chair will recall that we faced a circumstance of the worst winter in our history, followed by the most powerful winter storm in 50 years, followed by the worst flooding in 500 years, then followed by fires that destroyed much of downtown Grand Forks. The Grand Forks Herald, through it all, kept putting out the daily newspaper. It didn't matter that their own building was flooded or burned out. They kept producing that newspaper day after day after day.

More than producing a newspaper, they produced a remarkable document that told the story. They have been recognized broadly for their remarkable performance. I can tell you, Mr. President, in the community that newspaper is revered, because they were there at a time of maximum danger and threat to the community and they helped hold that community together.

Today I will be offering a resolution on behalf of myself and Senator DORGAN in recognition of the Pulitzer Prize that has now been extended to that newspaper for their remarkable public service. We are incredibly proud that the Grand Forks Herald has been so recognized. They are richly deserving. I hope my colleagues today on both sides will clear this resolution so that we can have the respect extended to that newspaper that they so richly deserve.

I thank the Chair. I especially thank my colleague, the leader, from South Dakota for his indulgence in permitting me to discuss this resolution. We, again, are seeking support on both sides so that this resolution can be adopted today and entered into the RECORD. I also thank my colleague from Georgia, Senator COVERDELL, for permitting me to talk about this resolution, albeit briefly.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak today about the honor bestowed upon the Grand Forks Herald last week. That newspaper received the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service news coverage, for its heroic efforts throughout the flood and fire that ravaged Grand Forks, North Dakota in April 1997.

The actions of the Grand Forks Herald during the flood set a new standard for performance under pressure. Let me make clear that while the award they have deservedly won is a journalism award, their service to the community goes far beyond the borders of journalism. The fact of the matter is that while this community was being inundated by water and fire, the Grand Forks Herald helped to hold it together by providing information that reassured and reunited families. The Herald

gave people the information they needed to assess the situation and make decisions based on facts and not rumors. I can't tell you how important it is to have facts at a time like this, when your world is being turned upside down, and anything, regardless of how outrageous it may sound, could be true.

When the history books are written about the Grand Forks fire and flood of 1997, there will be many heroes. This was, in fact, a season of heroes in North Dakota; from the individuals who acted heroically to save lives and property, to all the men and women of the media who faced and passed similar tests.

Of all the heroes, however, none will shine brighter than the Grand Forks Herald, which never missed an edition during the disaster. From the parent company right on through to the local management, administrative staff, news, production and delivery staff; all played a key role in holding the community together. All worked, despite enormous odds and tremendous obstacles, to be sure that as their world turned on its head, one thing would not change: North Dakotans could still pick up the Grand Forks Herald every morning and read the facts.

The Grand Forks Herald has been honored with the most prestigious award in journalism and it is a well-deserved honor. I am immensely proud of what they did and as a North Dakotan, I am also grateful for the service they provided to Grand Forks and our state at their most trying hour.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, if the distinguished Senator from North Dakota will yield for just a moment, I would like to be added as a cosponsor. I commend both Senators from North Dakota for the resolution and will certainly want to work with them to see that it will be adopted unanimously.

As he has noted, the Grand Forks journalistic community stood proud. Grand Forks, I think, perhaps more than anybody else, felt the full force of the natural disasters last year. For this paper to be so recognized, for it to have the opportunity to receive international recognition as a result of their effort is certainly appropriate and ought to be applauded. While many other newspapers did not win the Pulitzer Prize, I think it goes without saying that there are other newspaper efforts that were made last year that also deserve recognition for the tremendous work they did under very, very difficult circumstances.

Again, I commend the Senator from North Dakota for his effort. I hope we adopt the resolution. I certainly congratulate the newspaper.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask the Senator from North Dakota if he will add my name as a cosponsor. I am a journalism graduate. I was fas-

cinated with this Pulitzer award. I am pleased he is recognizing them in this manner.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank my colleagues.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to add Senator DASCHLE and Senator COVERDELL as original cosponsors of the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair also requests that the junior Senator from Nebraska be added to that august list.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask unanimous consent to add the junior Senator from Nebraska as well, Senator HAGEL, as an original cosponsor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. We will leave it open for other Senators that might also wish to cosponsor it.

Let me just say that the publisher, Mike Maidenberry, and the editor, Mike Jacobs, did truly a remarkable job in having this newspaper produced every single day even though their building was destroyed by flood and fire, and to produce a remarkable product that has won this prestigious Pulitzer Prize. We are very, very proud of what they have done, of what they have done to help hold that community together, and we are especially proud that it bring home this remarkable honor that I think all of us would say is absolutely justified. I yield the floor.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate minority leader.

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACT FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. DASCHLE. I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendments be set aside and I be permitted to speak on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HUTCHISON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, I look forward to the opportunity that we now have today and tomorrow to debate one of the most important issues facing our country. I applaud all of those involved, Senator COVERDELL, and others on our side, who have dedicated themselves to finding solutions.

I must say that while we offer solutions and while we mutually recognize the importance of the issue, I do not really know of an issue that probably divides us more philosophically at this point than does education.

Our Republican colleagues, in large measure, believe there is not a role at the Federal level for educational priorities, that it really is an issue that ought to be left to the local level, to public school districts, and to others.

Democrats, on the other hand, believe that there ought to be a role for every level of government, that the people of the United States have an interest and a need to ensure that our educational priorities and our edu-

cational challenges are met with every tool available to us in order to be able to compete effectively in the information age.

So that difference in philosophical approach brings us to the point where we are today, with two very different proposals on how we might best address education. One provides what I would describe as a minimal tax reduction—\$7 per tax return if your children are in public school and about \$37 if your children are in private school—to the parents of children attending school today, a \$1.6 billion plan that does not go very far when you simply spread it out over the many, many families in America who have children in public and private elementary and secondary school today. The other is our approach which allows a more targeted investment in some of the very specific needs that we have in education today.

I do not think there is much difference of opinion with regard to the recognition that a strong public education system is key to America's future. I would even argue that most of our Republican colleagues would share that view even though they are more likely to be more supportive, it appears, of private educational approaches than public.

Economic prosperity, our position as a world leader, our very democracy all depend on providing educational opportunity to children. We know that. We also know that in a new global information economy, knowledge and work force skills have become an extremely important factor in economic growth.

So at the dawn of the global information economy, it is appropriate to give opportunities to communities facing conflicting pressures from rising enrollments and aging infrastructure and demands by taxpayers for State and local relief. It is appropriate to find ways in which to provide communities with new tools to manage these conflicting pressures. We recognize that managing these pressures better would be good for society, good for the economy, and good for national security.

We have heard a lot about what is wrong with public education. For example, our 12th graders are behind the rest of the world in math and science. We all agree that is unacceptable. But there are some signs of progress. Our fourth graders are well above the average in mathematics and near the top in science.

Innovative programs are being implemented around the country today. Chicago has implemented a broad, districtwide reform program that ends social promotions, that raises standards, and that provides extra help through weekend and summer school programs. Parents and other individuals and communities all over the country are more involved in many aspects of schools than they have ever been before. So there are some good signs. Schools in low-income neighborhoods in New York